

# NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

**United States Congress**

**Massachusetts Seventh District**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **MARKEY SLAMS BUSH DECISION TO CUT BACK AIR MARSHAL PROTECTION ON PASSENGER FLIGHTS**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.:** Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA), a senior member of the Select Committee on Homeland Security, today sent a letter to the chairmen and ranking members of the House Appropriations Committee and the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security. Rep. Markey's letter, which is co-signed by 14 Members of the House of Representatives, urges the Appropriations Committee to reverse the \$13 million cut in the Federal Air Marshal Service included in the Bush Administration's Fiscal Year 2005 budget request.

"After the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, the Federal Air Marshal Service was dramatically expanded in an effort to thwart future terrorist attempts to use passenger planes as deadly weapons. While Al Qaeda continues to place commercial aircraft at the top of its target list, the Bush Administration seeks to cut funding for air marshals. In the event of a terrorist attack, pilots now are trained to remain in the cockpit behind reinforced doors, which means that armed marshals would provide much-needed protection against terrorists in the passenger cabin. The Bush Administration is writing a blank check for security in Iraq while it's nickel and diming aviation security here at home. The Federal Air Marshal Service is a vital part of our layered homeland security strategy. The Bush Administration's proposed funding cut is unwise, ill-timed and inconsistent with the risk of terrorist attacks against passenger planes."

In FY 2004, \$636 million was appropriated for the Federal Air Marshal Service. The Bush Administration's FY 2005 budget request contains a funding level of \$623 million, which represents a 2 percent cut compared to the prior year's funding level. Last month, the Federal Air Marshal Service concluded an agreement with the U.S. Secret Service, which will provide the FAMS with details of its flight plans, reducing the overlap that occurs when FAMS and Secret Service agents travel on the same flights. However, Secret Service agents onboard flights will not receive training as Federal Air Marshals and are not, in the words of the deputy director of the Secret Service "there to supplant air marshals." Secret Service agents will not operate according to the same procedures followed by Federal Air Marshals while onboard passenger aircraft, as they reportedly will respond to in-flight incidents only if the flight crew requests their assistance, a departure from the standard operating procedures of Federal Air Marshals, who are trained to recognize and respond to incidents without prompting from the flight crew.

"The cancellations and delays of more than two dozen international flights over the holidays last year demonstrated that more needs to be done, particularly with our counterparts overseas, to improve coordination when it comes to putting armed marshals onboard flights. Now is not the time to cut back on funding for the Federal Air Marshal Service, and the Bush Administration's proposed cut should be reversed as the Congress sets spending levels for the next fiscal year," Rep. Markey concluded.

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The text of the letter can be viewed at <http://www.house.gov/markey>